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ABSTRACT

High teacher attrition in rural Alaska is abetted by stress induced by the culturally and environmentally differing milieus of the arctic and sub-arctic. Severe climatic conditions curtail traditional activities, and confined isolated settings place strain on personal relationships and heighten irritability, anxiety, and anger, often leading to unique psychological and possibly physiological syndromes, such as cabin fever. Stress arising from the sociocultural complexity of the native culture is more disabling than that arising from the physical environment. Differing inter-ethnic communicative styles, culturally inappropriate teaching methods, dissimilar values, negative peer socialization processes, and village housing contribute to the teachers' problems. Teachers who are aided by technology and who take an active role in traditional out-of-door village activities can temper the psychological impact of arctic darkness and isolation. Many teachers gradually develop culturally congruent teaching styles and a contextual understanding of the native Alaskan pupil's world. The ability to cope with the unique stresses of teaching in rural Alaska requires time, effort, tolerance, flexibility, and objectivity. (JD)

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FROZEN AND FORGOTTEN: STRESS AMONG ALA[illegible]N BUSH TEACHERS

Steve Grubis

(Presented at the National Council of States on Inservice Education, Atlanta, Georgia, 1982)

The purpose of this paper is to examine the complex process of teacher stress induced by environmental and socio-cultural settings of village Alaska. An attempt is made to provide insights, sensitivities and social navigational strategies for Alaskan bush teacher survival. There are many successful rural teachers who thrive professionally in village settings. There are also a surprising number who succumb to the phenomenon of "stress," i.e., the discomfort and strain experienced by individuals entering a culturally and environmentally different milieu.

The focus of this paper is on teachers in arctic and sub-arctic Native villages who fall prey to emotionally disruptive influences and abandon their posts mid-year or leave after one year of teaching.

Rural Alaskan teacher stress and the resulting attrition are problems of multiple dimensions. Teachers who are debilitated by the village experience often become apathetic, pessimistic and cynical. This has a profound impact on the recipients of their services. Research suggests that the lack of teacher enthusiasm adversely affects student learning (Lortie, 1975). Additionally, the high attrition rate and occasional mid-school year departure convey a negative psychological message to students and community (Orvik, 1970). When the village teacher leaves, the implicit message is negative: "The teacher did not like us, our community, or our way of life." One of the most frequent questions posed by children to new teachers in rural Alaska within the first few weeks of school is, "Are you going to be here next year?" This common question, asked in September, usually comes as a surprise to the teacher and is viewed as being out of context. However, it is very important to students who have seen an endless succession of teachers come and go.

The attrition rate, which includes new hires, averaged approximately 40 percent for rural school districts in Alaska during 1978-1979 (Dickerson, 1980). Some rural school districts have experienced annual attrition as high as 78 percent. The attrition rate is especially high in communities with populations of 500 or less, which employ 67 percent of new teacher hires. Rural Alaskan school districts must continually select new staff and introduce them to the teaching setting. Eighty-five to ninety percent of the teaching certificates issued by the state are issued to teachers who transfer their credentials into Alaska from other states. Teachers in remote arctic and sub-arctic villages have short tenure: some fly to the village, take one brief look and leave on the same plane; some leave during the first week, and some leave unannounced during the holiday season, never to return (Rider, 1982).

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Teachers new to village Alaska encounter many major adjustments. These teachers are unfamiliar with village Alaska's close-knit social structure, extended family relationships, hunting-gathering activities, the use of informal, culturally defined village participation channels and inter-ethnic communicative styles. Dickerson (1980), in his comprehensive analysis of orientation needs of newly hired Alaskan teachers, found that the most frequently mentioned problems were "coping with isolation, understanding and adjusting to living and working with a minority culture, living in poor housing, and teaching in a multi-grade, multi-subject situation."

Environmental Setting

Alaska is an exotic environment for new teachers from the Outside[1]. The state is one-fifth the size of the continental U.S., has a larger coastline than the continental U.S., and has three distinct climate zones. Once one moves beyond the large population centers of Fairbanks, Anchorage and Juneau, physical conditions arise which contribute to the discomfort and stress of individuals not familiar with the setting.

Alaska is a land of impressive geographic features. There are numerous expansive river systems; many mountain ranges, including the North American Continent's highest mountain, Denali, which rests in the center of the state; notable bodies of oceanic water; and park systems larger than many states in the union. Winds have been clocked over 200 miles per hour in the volcanic Aleutians and wind chill temperatures of 150 below zero have been recorded in Barrow. Roads link only a few villages, making the airplane the major means of transportation. The rigorous climate and topography, the absence of any statewide road system, and communication difficulties contribute to strain and discomfort among both newly arrived teachers and those who are experienced in bush teaching. The setting is one in which the teacher soon learns that nature, rather than man, is master.

Common outdoor recreational activities that the teacher may have engaged in, even in the Northern States, are not always possible or even desirable in the North. It is the first time that many individuals will have had their out-of-door activities drastically curtailed. It is not unusual for the new teacher in a village to take a hike in the surrounding terrain. The teacher quickly learns that tundra is difficult to walk on, and that getting lost on the tundra is different from losing one's way on a "lower 48" state's side trail. Skiing or snowmachining in the dark at 50 below zero F degrees is not an experience one often does for sheer pleasure. The simplest of tasks can become dangerous ordeals.

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[1]A term used to describe the lower states and/or the world beyond Alaska.

One story exists about a new village teacher who had just taken her first Maqi (steambath). When she followed the local custom of stepping down through a hole chopped in the river ice to cool off, she disregarded the advice of a local villager, "Don't sit on the ice." As the teacher was lowering herself into the water, her buttocks touched the ice. Her derrière was frozen fast. Villagers were able to release her only after considerable discussion, effort and hot water.

New teacher antics provide local villagers with a great source of winter amusement. The entertainers (teachers) are generally new every year and their follies surface over village kitchen tables. Dressing to go out becomes a carefully planned task that is not accomplished hastily. One does not grab a coat and walk out the door into the arctic winter. At extreme temperatures mittens cannot be removed to touch metal doorknobs or one runs the risk of instantly freezing one's flesh to the metal. Eyelids can freeze shut and nostrils clog with ice in the brief walk between the school and home. Many teachers' homes in the far north do not have the same plumbing facilities as were taken for granted elsewhere. Some teachers need to cut and haul ice for water and use buckets rather than flush toilets. Teachers and "honeybuckets," as they are affectionally called, often have adversary relationships. Common household tasks can become major catastrophies for the bush teacher. The energy and effort required to obtain warmth, water and light can be greatly exacerbated by the severe climate.

Many bush teachers consider themselves fortunate to have a house One teacher in western Alaska was forced to live in the local jail, a sixteen-foot-square, uninsulated plywood building divided into four cells. Other bush teachers have lived in tents, crates, storage sheds, warehouses, and school classrooms. The lack of adequate housing induces strain among many rural teachers.

Cabin Fever

There are unique psychological syndromes that plague bush teachers and others who winter in the arctic and sub-arctic. One of the most subtle is cabin fever. Munstenhjelm (1953) defines cabin fever as an insidious disease which creeps unnoticed upon people who are forced to live together for a long time in cramped quarters. Experienced bush teachers often tease cheechakos (newcomers) about cabin fever, which tends to be more common in recent arrivals than to those more familiar with the environment. Although prior experience with isolated living in severe climatic conditions is no guarantee of immunity from this syndrome, it is reasonable to assume that newcomers are more susceptible because they are taking the initial step in their journey from the familiar outside world into a context that is both culturally and environmentally exotic. The condition of cabin fever is characterized by irritability, depression, focusing on the negative, easily provoked anger and a breakdown of personal relationships (Abbott and Kehoe, 1972).

One of the more interesting facets of cabin fever is that it normally occurs after the severity of winter has passed. Dr. Karl Hartviksen, one of Norway's most eminent psychiatrists and experts on the mental and emotional problems of Northern Norwegians, concludes that people are more affected by the period called "murkey times," after the darkest period is over (Wechsberg, 1972). This is also substantiated by the observations of Abbott and Kehoe (1972) in the Yukon Territory. In Alaska, the months of February, March and April are referred to in some circles as "funny time." During these months the cheechako (newcomer) expects winter to be over, but it is not. At this time many Alaskan villages have winter carnivals, fur rendezvous, dog mushing races and round-ups. These outdoor social activities occur when they are most needed to combat stress. The scheduling of these numerous social events in March and April reflects an indigious wisdom for coping with the psychological syndrome of cabin fever.

Those who choose not to participate in the celebrations increase the likelihood of increasing psychological difficulties. It is not unheard of for a teacher, after making it through his/her first arctic winter, to suddenly leave the village unannounced. The teacher may hop a mail plane, leaving behind personal effects, including dishes on the table. A letter of resignation may arrive a month or two later from somewhere in the outside world. This type of incident plays havoc with students, communities and school administrators. Suddenly leaving is a typical delayed response to the syndrome known as cabin fever.

It is not unusual for northern teaching couples to encounter marital discord and divorce. The confined living conditions, lack of privacy, and long dark winters all contribute to marital strife. Some couples seek teaching positions in isolated posts in hopes that the setting will magically erase any discord between them. This is certainly not the case. Husband and wife disunity tends to be heightened in remote culturally different environs. The psychiatric observations of Abbott and Kehoe (1972) in the Yukon Territory support a higher rate of marital problems and dissolution. The authors also observed a "higher incidence of manic depressive illness as compared to "Outside" (p.6).

The occurrence of cabin fever in the early spring, after the rigors of winter have passed, becomes reasonable when examined in the light of responses to stress. Individuals tend to react to stress after the period of tension has elapsed. Battle fatigue is a classic example of this, i.e., the delayed Viet Nam stress syndrome. The impact of the discomfort and heightened tension of battle is not felt until afterwards. Another example is that of students who often experience more anxiety and sleeplessness after an exam rather than prior to taking the exam.

Physiological Factors

It is possible that latitudinal location on the planet can facilitate human stress. When the arctic world slips into darkness for several months

there is potential for little-understood physiological repercussions. Darkness in our society is associated with uninhibited behavior and is often viewed as a catalyst for aggressive behavior. Polar darkness may contribute to anti-social behavior (Page, 1976).

Another hypothesis involving arctic darkness and mental/emotional problems is based upon alterations in the body's metabolism of calcium. Calcium is a fundamental ingredient for the chemical transmission of neural impulses. An abnormality in physiological functioning of calcium can result in a number of central nervous system disorders, i.e., hysteria like behavior (Foulks, 1972). Alterations to the central nervous system can be manifested in mild depression or anxiety. Polar darkness can also contribute to abnormalities with the body's use of calcium in another manner. The arctic and sub-arctic winter sees a dramatic reduction in ultraviolet radiation. Ultraviolet radiation normally induces chemicals in our skin to manufacture vitamin D, which enhances the assimilation of the calcium in the intestines (Foulks, 1972). The lack of ultraviolet radiation may possibly effect the central nervous system. However, this hypothesis needs further research before it can adequately account for the stress syndrome experienced by bush teachers.

The arctic and sub-arctic teaching post with its dark and lengthy winters, inadequate housing, curtailment of traditional outdoor activities, potential marital discord and possible alterations in the body's metabolism of calcium can be all antecedents of stress. Despite the discomfort and strain arising from the physical environment, many of these concerns can be ameliorated by technology and teacher-coping strategies. Adequate housing, television, radio, gymnasiums, and improved communication networks are erasing many traditional physical sources of bush teacher stress. The teacher who gets out into the environment, hunts, fishes, dog mushes, skies, and snowmachines has various channels to alleviate the stress that derives from the confinement and inactivity of the arctic. These activities provide occasions for the teacher to interact with community members, and also places the teacher in the position of learner. This posture of being a learner creates cultural windows of interaction between the teacher and the village. In this role, the teacher has an excellent potential for harmonizing norms of the village and the school. Teachers who engage in maqi (steambaths), subsistence activities, visiting and traditional holiday activities are generally viewed as "good" educators by the village. These teachers also tend to exhibit more cultural empathy in the classroom and stay in the village longer (Grubis, 1981).

The physical environment of the Northern teaching station contains many potential sources of stress. Lantis (1968) feels that stress that emerges from the physical environment is not as significant as stress which derives from the social environment.

> Long dark nights help little. But even these problems are small compared with those stemming from the drain on the emotional and intellectual reserves of a

> teacher facing perhaps his first encounter with virtual isolation, confined in an interpersonal maze of cultural unfamiliarity (Orvik, 1970: p.1).

The teacher can learn to cope with polar darkness: there are a host of traditional village activities to engage in, e.g., skin sewing, baking, ice fishing, visiting, etc. Technology can also help alleviate the boredom that many experience in the arctic. Villages now have radio and satellite television, and there are many home projects to occupy one's idle time. However, stress that arises from the socio-cultural complexity of encountering a new culture is much more insidious and not as easily managed as that which derives from the physical environment.

Peer Socialization Processes

The village teacher has three elements to adjust to simultaneously. First, there are the Native pupils, who comprise all or most of the school population. The teacher is unaccustomed to the pupils' learning and communicative styles. There are also new curricula, unfamiliar history and possibly a Native language to confront. Secondly, there is the socio-cultural make-up of the village itself. There are differing beliefs, values, holidays and traditions. Thirdly are the teachers' own colleagues. Many teachers feel that it is more difficult to adjust to their peers than to community members or students.

In teaching settings a peer socialization process occurs. The process is much more significant in an isolated, culturally different milieu than in an urban setting. Isolation tends to magnify interpersonal exchanges. The isolation of the setting and the lack of available transportation limit the amount of diverse professional interaction. There are only a given number of professionals in any one village, making professional discourse severely restricted. New teachers are in a sense at the mercy of the established views of their more experienced colleagues. If their peers have negative positions toward the pupils or the community, it becomes difficult for the newcomer to articulate opposing views. Because there is not an abundance of western professionals in villages, it is important for the new teacher to establish rapport with his colleagues and professionally survive in this setting.

A new teacher adjusting to his/her peers in an arctic or sub-arctic school post is placed under unique colleague pressures. Colleague contact in most "outside" settings ends with the work day. In village Alaska, teachers work together, often sharing the same classroom and may live next to each other and share the same facilities. There is limited privacy in villages: teachers are confined together. Nelson and Gunderson (1962) suggest that compatibility in confined groups is as important, if not more so, than task performance. This appears to be substantiated in the view of both peers and administrators. This implies that doing a good job may not be as important as being well received by group members. It can be most disconcerting for a new bush teacher to observe inadequate job performance by peers and have these

same peers being highly regarded. This circumstance can exacerbate professional and personal teacher stress.

Studies of navy personnel in isolated antarctic stations suggest several hypotheses that may have relevance for remote Alaskan teaching posts. It appears that there is a tendency in isolated groups to be less accepting of authority. There is less tolerance for the formal rules and regulations of institutions and authority figures (Nelson, 1964). A new principal in a remote school site could encounter staff hostility if he/she were to operate in a tight, rigid and formal manner. Unflexible formal behavior, which may be appropriate elsewhere, has been the demise of some rural administrators. This is not to imply that schools in isolated bush settings need to function permissively, but rather with flexibility and awareness of the real world beyond the classroom. Alaskan teachers have identified flexibility, objectivity and tolerance as qualities that enable them to effectively function in remote teaching posts (Dickerson, 1980).

Differing Political Communicative Contexts

In addition to the stress induced by adjusting to one's peers, the new teacher needs to attend to a culture and interactional style of communication with which he is unaccustomed. Teachers enter villages with assumptions about how the world is, based on models that were appropriate elsewhere. The conceptual baggage that teachers carry into the village is often in excess and is a potential fountainhead of future teacher/community conflict. Preconceived assumptions can inhibit the development of insights and understandings which are crucial for lessening stress induced by new cultural scenes. A Kwakiutal Village and School, (Wolcott, 1967) describes a Canadian village in British Columbia and some aspects of teacher/community interaction; namely, that the teacher's expectations were rooted in the "traditions of the dominant society" (Wolcott, 1967: p. 81) which contrasted with village expectations. These differences in sources of experience were identified by Wolcott as an area of potential conflict between school and community.

It is paramount that teachers employed in a differing cultural milieu be aware that man as so aptly described in Aristotle's Politics (Sinclair, 1966), is a social animal who participates in the politics and public existence of the community. How man manifests these political involvements varies from community to community. The inability to fathom the scope and diversity of human political behavior is a significant encumbrance for the bush teacher.

Philips' (1972) work on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon provides insights into Indian manifestations of political involvement. Philips found that Indian participation in political activities is markedly different from non-Indian political participation. Philips points out that everyone on the Warm Springs Reservation is invited to political and social activities, although only certain Indians would attend regularly at particular events. She also noticed that no one person verbally directed the activities. In activities where there were speaking roles, anyone could speak out and/or

make a speech. There was no time limit on responses or the number of speakers. At political meetings, questions would not necessarily be answered by panel or council members, but by anyone who felt qualified to respond. This political participative style does not imply that there are no Indian leaders: Indian leaders simply function differently from leaders in other cultural contexts. Political leaders among the Warm Springs tribe may not necessarily hold any political position. Philips found that there tends to be little distinction in various activities between audience and the panel, or performers. It appears that each individual chooses his own degree of participation in social and political events. Hence it is really not necessary for a tribal leader to hold any political office.

In many Eskimo communities it is not uncommon for influential leaders to hold no visible elected positions within the village. The individual the teacher deals with, i.e., school board chairperson, may only be playing the role of "pretend boss" (angagguqaruags). The angagguqaruags or "pretend boss" signs the official papers and conducts business with outsiders. The following incident depicts an actual event that illustrates the manner by which a "pretend boss" functioned in a Yupik Eskimo village and the ensuing confusion and stress it caused the teacher.

The teacher at an advisory school board meeting explained the need for a social activity for village youth. A dance was suggested and unanimously agreed upon by the board. There was no dissenting discussion or any hint of displeasure with the unanimous decision. The next day the teacher was informed by the advisory board chairperson that the board had decided to change its mind and there would be no dance. There was no explanation from the chairperson nor from anyone else on the board. The teacher assumed that the reason for the abrupt reversal of the board revolved around a deep-seated conflict between the school and the community. The teacher had previously been told by other teachers that the board would do things to get him in trouble with the students. A few weeks later the teacher overheard a conversation in a village Maqi. He learned that a particular elder was opposed to school dances. This single elder was responsible for the reversal of the board's decision. The elder held no elected post within the community, yet his wishes carried the weight of a Supreme Court decision in this Yupik village.

It is apparent that political participation in Native communities is markedly different when compared to white middle-class communities. Bush teachers, who are non-initiates of the cultural scene, have difficulty understanding this. Village events have a pace and flow that is beyond the grasp of the new teacher, which can lead to frustration. Human beings are all ethnocentric in part, and our assumptions about how the world "hangs together" are often not applicable when in a different cultural milieu. Nothing is more upsetting than disturbances in what one assumes is the natural order of events. A disturbance which makes it impossible to predict in any rational manner what will happen next is the most difficult to adapt to. Village life is a labyrinth of compact interpersonal relationships tightly woven with the natural world. The village is infinitely subtle. The teacher is an unaware

observer who glimpses only the surface features of village social, political and economic structures. These structures have slowly unfolded over 30-60,000 years in a land that is one of the most uncompromising on earth. The situation is one in which teacher judgments are often hastily made on ethnocentric and faulty assumptions. These judgments subsequently alienate the teacher from the community and lead to teacher frustration. The predicament is analogus to understanding a sealed watch by having only seen the outside. You can hear the watch ticking and see the hands move, yet, you can never know whether your imagined picture of the mechanism is in any way accurate.

Proximity Restraints

Carrying the watch analogy one step further, let us assume that some of the inner workings of the watch are composed of the following: a close-knit social structure, extended family relationships, a hunting-gathering economic base, differing inter-ethnic communicative styles and informal information dissemination networks, all of which have matured over a considerable span of time. Total immersion in a field setting, as Wax (1971) clearly elaborates, is crucial for the development of an understanding of the inner workings of a community. When the inner workings of a community appear strange and unpredictable, emotional strain arises. The teacher or any observer stepping inside another culture carries with him biases and blindspots which influence what is observed. The Alaskan bush teacher is handicapped in the development of his understanding of the culture by the location of his home. The proximity of the typical teacherage and school in most northern settlements is away from the village. Teacherages and schools are customarily self-contained units with their own separate source of electrical power and water. The furnishings and architectural style are culturally incongruent with most village structures. Almost all educational facilities in the arctic and sub-arctic would fit unnoticed into any middle-class neighborhood. Dubbs and Barnhardt contend that northern schools become in a sense a "huge alien physical island in the community" (1982, p.3). Teachers sequestered on these islands are unlikely to turn over the first stones of community comprehension. School facilities physically and symbolically stand on the fringe of the village. The proximity of the school and teacherage mitigate against the development of insights and understandings of the very culture the teacher works in. It is no wonder that frustration, misjudgments and consequently high attrition rates plague the remote village teacher.

Values and Teaching Methodologies

The educational arena is often the source of frustration for new bush teachers. A successful teacher in the outside schools may or may not be successful in a remote village setting. The basic values of the professionals who work with Native children at times seem radically opposed to the values fostered by Native parents. Teachers seem future oriented. Their former environment has encouraged postponement of immediate gratification for future

rewards them for time on task. This contrasts sharply with village time considerations which are related to the seasons, weather conditions and migration patterns. These opposing values surface most readily in the classroom, especially when the teacher is from an entirely different cultural milieu than that of the student. This clash of values is illustrated in the following:

TABLE I*

Native/Non-Native Values

Non-Native	Indian-Eskimo
individual excellence--"getting ahead"	cooperative group interaction
deferred rewards--"If you get an education you will..."	more immediate satisfaction--immediate future more important than the long-term
work is innately valued--"the devil makes use of idle time"	work and enjoyment of life go hand in hand
manipulate the environment to suit your own ends	adapt to, and live with your environment
education as preparation for life	education and life are inseparable
punctuality--"school starts promptly at..."	formal education is one part of daily routine

*Source: Yellowknife, Northwest Territory: Department of Education, 1971.

The above table's differentiation of Native/non-Native values has been extensively discussed by Native university students throughout Alaska and they strongly reaffirm the opinions contained in Table I. It is apparent that being confined in a community of dissimiliar values can lead to teacher discomfort and stress.

Another factor in addition to differing values which increase teacher stress is that the teacher's traditional teaching methods may not necessarily work in Native communities. Some traditional teaching methods such as spotlighting, which is singling out an individual in a class to respond, may

actually be a cultural embarassement to pupils. Inter-ethnic styles of communication are different among Native Americans. The pause time between a question and the response to the question is different among Native Americans as compared to Anglos. The longer length of the pause time between sentences of Athabaskan Indians lead Anglos to conclude that the Athabaskan has finished speaking. This cues the Anglo to begin talking again, which the Athabaskan interprets as an interruption of his speaking turn. During conversations such as these, attitudes develop about the other person. The Anglo might think the Athabaskan had nothing to say, when in fact he hadn't had a chance to speak. The Athabaskan might interpret the Anglo's speech as pushy, talkative or self-centered (Scollon, 1980). In the classroom differences in pause time result in questions being answered by the teacher, not by those to whom the question was addressed. Further information on inter-ethnic communication styles can be found in Scollon, 1980 and Gumperz, 1977.

Among the Yupik and Inupiaq Eskimos there is an extensive amount of non-verbal communication. For example, a Yupik child responding affirmatively to a teacher question may raise his eyebrows. This facial expression is also a common positive response to a question among Eskimos. Another facial signal indicates a negative response. The teacher who is unaware of these differing facial feedback channels can reach false conclusions about the intellectual abilities of students. Factors other than differences in feedback channels can lead to classroom and community miscommunicative events. Some classroom miscommunication can be based on a lack of contextual understanding. For example, a student might be late for class. The excuse to the teacher might be "I was getting water." "Getting water" may imply a whole sequence of involved actions, i.e., going down to the river with buckets and a sled, chopping a hole in the ice in the correct place, filling the buckets and hauling the sled home. The teacher, whose housing may be different from those in the community may simply get his water by turning on the faucet. These types of events contribute to the frustration the bush teacher experiences when trying to "make sense" out of his new world. That world can be shielded from his understanding by the location of his home and school, ethnic-communicative styles, contextual awareness and his own ethnocentric views.

One approach to the high teacher attrition rate would be to employ local teachers. Native teachers would be familiar with environmental and socio-cultural scenes. Native teachers would bring a knowledge of village life styles and child rearing patterns to the classroom. The knowledge would facilitate the development of school curricula that would be founded on the background and culture the child brings to school. However, less than two percent of the State of Alaska's teachers are Native, despite ninety-five percent of the rural population being Native. It is anticipated that this disparity will continue into the future.

The preparation and continued assistance of new teachers in bush Alaska is one of the goals of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, College of Human and Rural Development. The University offers a year-long sequence of three, three-credit courses and workshops that assist new teachers in adapting to a

different cultural milieu. The Cross-Cultural Orientation Program (X-COP) provides teachers new to Alaska with conceptual tools as well as physical and interactional coping strategies. Two-thirds of this staff development program occurs on site in the remote teaching post. Some rural school districts require new hires to participate in the program, while others strongly recommend involvement. The program was considered to be of significant benefit in assisting new teachers in adjusting to rural classrooms and communities. It was found that the teachers who participated in the program seemed to have a low attrition rate (Schichnes, 1983).

SUMMARY

In summary, high teacher attrition is abetted by the stress induced by the culturally and environmentally differing milieus of the arctic and sub-arctic. The severe climatic conditions of the far North can curtail traditional individual activities. The confined isolated settings can place undue strain on marital relationships and heighten irritability, anxiety, anger and lead to unique psychological and possibly physiological syndromes, e.g., cabin fever. Teachers aided by technology and taking an active role in traditional out-of-door village activities can temper the psychological impact of arctic darkness and isolation.

Stress that arises from the socio-cultural complexity of encountering a new culture is much more disabling than that which arises from the physical environment. Differing inter-ethnic communicative styles, culturally inappropriate teaching methodologies, dissimilar values, negative peer socialization processes and village housing proximity restraints require extensive effort and time to overcome. Many northern teachers gradually develop culturally congruent teaching styles and a contextual understanding of their Native pupils' world. It is from this understanding that sound educational pedagogy unfolds. These educators have realized that the ability to cope with the unique stresses of northern teaching requires time, effort, tolerance, flexibility and objectivity. It is with these teachers that the long range improvement of educational services to the far north rests.

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